

## ***Fire Suppression Comments and Suggestions***

<i><b>Date Submitted</b></i>	<i><b>Persons Name</b></i>	<i><b>Affiliation</b></i>	<i><b>e-mail address</b></i>	<i><b>Comments/Suggestions</b></i>
10/30/2007	Ron Johnson	none		I live in an incorporated city in Montana, and pay for fire fighting services through my city property taxes. Nobody outside of my community helps pay for that. Yet, it seems that I (and all Montana taxpayers) pay for fire fighting services for folks that choose to live in the woods. Frankly, I know that many of these folks I am subsidizing with fire fighting have a lot more wealth than me. Where is the fairness in that? I hear that we want to reduce "sprawl" and yet us city dwellers are (forced to) paying for the sprawlers. Fix that. Thank you.

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11/5/2007	Fred Samson		fb.samson@gmail.com	Both Presidents Carter and Reagan suggested a single Federal Department of Natural Resources to improve conservation in the United States that would also result in truly substantial savings in administrative and overhead costs—funding that could be applied to on-the-ground conservation to include fire—and more effective and efficient conservation. For example, why in Montana, should major Federal administrative offices be in Billings (BLM), Missoula (FS), and Helena (FWS) when one could be adequate (let alone combining offices in Butte, Dillon, Billings and elsewhere). Imagine what a single Federal Natural Resource administrative office housed with MFWP or DNR (and in other cities) would bring to effective and efficient resource management and conservation. Not needed is yet another request for increases in State and Federal funding, communication and collaboration, and public involvement—ideas with little record of success. Thank you.
11/7/2007	Phil Riley	Bitterroot Valley Resident	priley@wsi-insurance.com	I am very encouraged to see legislature establish a committee to address these critical issues surrounding forest fires in Montana. Due to the dynamics of this issue there wont be a silver bullet to address all the concerns. We need to find a way to stabilize the fire fighting budget from year to year. I would love to discuss an option that has been of great success to other states in our region.

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1/3/2008	Debbie Matthews		myladybug@blackfo ot.net	Get rid of the environmentalists. Open the woods back up for supervised logging like in the 1970-80's, we didn't have this problem then. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see why we are in this situation. Market our natural resource, yes we do need it to be monitored, but what is more expensive? Monitoring or fighting fires? Come on get with it. Sick of Summer fires.
1/7/2008	Jane Hamman	none	Janeleehamman@a ol.com	State and federal forest management policies are of great concern to me. If we continue the way we are, with current policies and never ending environmental law suits, I predict one-third or more of our forested lands will be destroyed by fires over the next decade or so. We need think outside the box in getting everyone to the table community-by-community to plan; pass litigation legislation that mandates payment of costs and penalties for frivolous suits that stop management plans; and harness the energy of wood products harvesters and responsible citizens to help with thinning and gathering wood so our forests more closely resemble those of Germany and Switzerland. As fuel prices increase, there are many who would gladly help cut and who would burn the medium slash in homes and businesses. Many thanks to every firefighter and manager who help suppress fires in 2007. Amazing job!

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1/7/2008	George Wuerthner	FDE Ecological Projects Director	wuerthner@earthlink.net	<p>I am the author of Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy. I have been studying fire ecology for decades, and have visited many of the largest blazes around the West to learn how they burned and what circumstances drove them. Consider the following points.</p> <p>1. Most of the acreage burned in any one year occurs in a relatively few large blazes. In other words if you were to put out all the other fires, these few fires would account for the bulk of all acreage burned. This is important because of point 2.</p> <p>2. Big blazes are driven primarily by climatic conditions—when there is extended drought, low humidity, and high winds, you get big fires. The 1910 burn that scorched 3.5 million acres of northern Idaho and western Montana is a good example. More than half of the acreage that burned occurred on two days August 21 and what has nefariously been known ever since as Black Friday August 22. That day the winds were roaring across North Idaho and into Montana. This leads to number 3.</p> <p>3. When conditions are ripe for a big blaze, and assuming you have an ignition source (lightning or human), you can't stop the fires. You just have to get out of the way or are out of the way (i.e. do not build your house in the woods).</p> <p>4. As consequence of points 1, 2, 3, thinning proposals as "fuels reduction" have little impact on fire spread. Thinning does work to reduce fire intensity (how hot it burns), but little to stop the spread of large blazes. This is because high winds blow burning embers as much as a mile or more ahead of any fire front, starting new blazes. Unless you were to thin all the forests in the West (an impossible task to</p>

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				<p>say the least), you are going to have little effect on fire spread on a landscape scale—though there may be some benefit to surgical thinning in very specific and concentrated areas—more on that below.</p> <p>5. There is no predicting where a fire will start and burn. So many things affect fire spread including the wind direction, topography, past fire and insect history which shapes present stand age and species composition. The idea that you can thin forests across the landscape in hope that the areas selected will be the same ones that will likely burn is optimistic at best.</p> <p>6. Thinning is not a one time treatment. When you thin a forest you release a lot of other trees from competition which rapidly grow to fill holes in the canopy and understory. Unless you are prepared to go back repeatedly and re-thin the forest over and over again, you lose much of the fuel reduction value. Long before any federal or state agencies could finish with their first generation of thinning, they would need to go back and repeat the thinning process again on the earlier thinning projects. Are there realistically the funds to pay for all this thinning—only if you accept the commercial logging of big trees to pay for it all—and that results in unacceptable impacts to the forest. Logging big trees to pay for the cutting of small trees is really a "Vietnam strategy" of destroying the forest to save the forest.</p> <p>7. Thinning is not a proven strategy. Most of the evidence to support thinning is anecdotal— as many places where advocates claim thinning stopped or slowed a fire, there are other examples where fires burned right through thinned stands. Did the winds slow, for instance, just when it approached a thinned parcel and/or was the topography such that it led to a reduction in flames—that had nothing</p>

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				<p>to do with thinning? These kinds of questions are difficult to answer and control, thus proponents of thinning can always claim that thinning was the reason a particular fire slowed down, but often as not, thinning has no observable effect on fire spread under severe fire conditions.</p> <p>For instance, much of the forest that was charred in the big Derby fire in Montana were stands of savanna like ponderosa pine. A similar effect was noted in Oregon's Biscuit fire where naturally thin (due to special soil that restricts plant growth) Jeffrey pine stands were scorched. In both of these cases, high winds drove flames across the landscape.</p> <p>Remember even if thinning appears to work under normal fire conditions, it appears to be less effective under severe fire weather. And it's very difficult to replicate these conditions in an experiment. No scientist can thin a forest, then create a super drought, low humidity and winds in excess of fifty miles an hour and have it burn both the thinned and adjacent unmanipulated forest stand at the same time.</p> <p>Thinning, as a fire hazard reduction strategy, could work under less than severe fire conditions, but fail miserably under the high fire severity climatic conditions.</p> <p>8. There is even some evidence that suggests that thinning can actually increase the fire severity and intensity because thinning opens up the forests to more wind and permits greater drying of ground vegetation and the fine fuels that sustains fire spread.</p> <p>9. Logging is not a benign activity, nor is it the same selective factor as natural events like fire and beetles. Logging introduces human intrusions into the forest ecosystem. This can disturb sensitive wildlife like wolverine and grizzly bear.</p>

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				<p>Logging can be a vector for the spread of weeds and disease into the forest. Logging almost certainly creates more sedimentation in streams. Logging removes woody debris (dead wood) which has many ecological functions including providing homes for many invertebrates. Logging removes snags, and the potential for future snags—snags are important for many wildlife species, particularly cavity dwellers. Logging can alter nutrient cycles. Logging roads, even closed and "reclaimed" roads, often become new ORV's routes. Furthermore, logging tends to select against early successional species that are favored by fire and beetles, and also skews age classes.</p> <p>10. Where thinning may be appropriate is for community protection. I.e. if you thin say within a half mile or less of a community or whatever, AND you can get a big fire fighting force in the area, thinning can sometimes help to slow a fire enough that fire fighters can put it out. However, you have to have a lot of fire fighters on the scene for this to be effective—and the only time you can cost-effectively justify this kind of force is to protect structures. For instance in 1988 in Yellowstone, there were was a massive effort to protect Old Faithful Inn—this worked because you could get hundreds of firefighters in one spot, but you're not going to get that kind of force to focus on a big fire front that may be miles wide.</p> <p>11. Fire proofing homes is far easier than fire proofing the forest. Mandatory metal roofs, removal of fine fuels near homes, and perhaps surgical thinning immediately adjacent to homes are the best way to deal with wildfire.</p> <p>12. Finally nearly all efforts to reduce big blazes and restore "healthy" forests</p>

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				<p>assume that "healthy" forests are ones with few dead trees and without large fires. This may itself be a flawed assumption. Many ecologists would argue that a "healthy" forest has a good share of dead trees and at some times in the natural course of events, to have a great many dead trees. The same can be said for large fires—large stand replacement blazes may be ecologically important.</p> <p>The bottom line is that we should seriously question whether we need any manipulation of our forests. I believe the forests are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. After all they have been operating without our aid for a lot longer than we have even existed. They are used to drought, fires, beetles, and even changing climate. IN the face of global climate change, protecting large tracts of unmanipulated landscapes may be the real salvation for our forests.</p>



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1/8/2008	Ted Snow		snogf@aol.com	On Saturday, Dec. 29th of 07 I traveled from Great Falls to Anaconda. I was totally amazed by what I saw between Boulder and Butte. The Pine beetle has killed the forests in this area. Literally hundreds if not thousands of acres have been wiped out by the beetle. I believe it is uncalled for and suggest your committee look into why the Forest Service is not doing anything to remedy the situation. This area is a tinder box and poses an immediate threat to Montanans. The supervisor of the Deerlodge National Forest should be dismissed along with other top administrators for allowing this to happen. Words cannot describe what I saw, you need to drive this stretch of highway and see for yourself. I am sure you will agree it is ignorant and non-sensical to allow something like this to happen.
1/8/2008	Dusti Lowndes	MT Dept. of Env. Quality - Public Water Supplies, Security & Emergency Preparedness Coordinator	dlowndes@mt.gov	Are the vulnerabilities and sensitivities of Public Water Supplies being discussed within this committee or included in this study? Such as: capacity issues in assisting with suppression and/or increased demands for the response operation; and the concern for source water and water shed protection.

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1/9/2008	James Brusda		brusda@bresnan.net	<p>I really believe the best way to prevent big wildfires from happening is through prevention. By prevention I meaning logging more trees. It is a terrible shame to see all of this timber burn up and cause significant health problems and aviation problems all because we didn't want to take the steps to prevent the fires from occurring. With the cost of lumber at record levels, and logging companies going out of business we can help all Americans by harvesting more timber.</p> <p>The only catch would be that the logging companies would go back and re-plant new little trees where they harvested. This way the forest would re-grow back, but healthier and we would be able to harvest new wood in another 30 years...a continous supply of timber would then be created.</p> <p>Please feel free to contact me via email anytime if you have any questions.</p> <p>Thanks, Jim</p>
1/10/2008				<p>Allow good forest management by responsible logging practices. Stop fires before they get too big and out of control by checkerboard logging, create jobs in this state besides tourism and growth that won't last! Give Montana back to the natives!</p>

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1/17/2008	Brendan Donovan Sr.	Inventor - fire suppression systems and apparatus	bren.donovan@rcn.com	<p>Please be on the watch for new approaches ...</p> <p>Pre positioned in known tinder areas (forest crown), lightning arrestors and tree top hotstrike disappers, coupled with fireline extinguishers broadcasting chem suppressants,</p> <p>all placed by helicopter, to perform as high firewall or 'break' when the wildfire domes or spreads thru the remote, often isolated wilderness forest canopy.</p>
1/18/2008	David Meccage	none	dhm@midrivers.com	<p>You can let the timber burn, like you have been doing or cut it. Stop this "back fire" control stuff. Let the local fire people fight them.</p> <p>Davvid Meccage Fallon co. fire fighter</p>

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1/19/2008	Mark Draper	Retired Fire Capt (years)	mad911@rexforddsl.net	<p>I know this is not something you wish to hear but you may want to look at how the state of California does fire protection and use what parts of it you can. Why reinvent the wheel. One thing that I noticed is the lack of obtainable training. Many of the fire fighters in the state of Montana are volunteers and work 40 or more hours a week. How can we expect them to use the vacation time to attend a class at the only college in Montana that gives training?? Again the training I received was varied and spread out through out the state. It was called train the trainers. I would be willing to expand on this area if you wish. One of the concerns I have is what I call the head in the sand mentality. In Lincoln county our county board members always say the same thing "you moved up there it's your problem " well that is true I did but I also don't like to pay the amount of taxes I do and get nothing in return! No fire protection ( a bunch of old guys in a private in a 501C3 company) , no police except for the Border Patrol. I think it is time that the state and the counties take the bull by the horns and do something about housing developments, even if it means that the builder has to put in fire sprinklers and some form of money for fire protection. I am told that the money that I pay in taxes to my county is for county fire protection( not DNRC ) but I have never seen a county fire engine respond to our area. We have an half attempt for a fire service 90 percent are over 60 to 65 years old with heart problems and breathing problems, so much for having to be 34 years old to become a firefighter? They have no experiences in fighting fires (structure or wild land) and I personally tried to help them by using my 20 Years of experience to help train them and they all failed the first two written test and have problems</p>

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				<p>figuring out which end of the hose to use! They can't even find the time for training they always have prior commitments? If I had not been injured while doing my job as a fire fighter I would volunteer but I am disabled so I did what I could. I guess what I am saying is some of our problems are within the fire service its self. I know volunteers are a great thing and save thousands of dollars but it make me mad when I read and hear that the different departments depend on the state funds for their yearly budget by fighting fires through out the state. I am not talking a couple of thousand dollars but \$50,000.00 or more. Some volunteer department buy new engines with this money. I am sorry but why does all of the tax money go to a few fire departments while mine has to have bake sales just to stay alive? Maybe all this money being spent should be used to bolster the DNRC fire department for more engine crews and stop making some Volunteer departments rich. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me might I also say that having a state Fire Chief and Department ( not the fire Marshall)like an office of emergency services that could make sure that all fire departments get the training and meet the state standards and dispatch fire equipment ( I am not sure if DNRC does this or not) and to assure that the fire fighters and citizens are safe,trained and well informed. Again I would ask you to look at other states, California having largest fires and contingency of fire fighters,also how they handle the fire departments and their money matters. I would be glad to assist you in any way as a retired fire Capt.</p> <p>Sincerely Mark Draper</p>

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1/21/2008	Tom Tokos	Trustee, West Kootenai Fire Protection Company	ttokos@interbel.net	<p>As you are aware the Federal and State Governments are putting pressure on local governments and the individual property owner to be more responsible for the protection of their lands from wildfire. We, in the West Kootenai area, support that position and have taken on our responsibility by establishing the West Kootenai Fire Protection Company, a private, non-profit (501 (c) 3), donation only funded organization. However, we cannot accomplish this without assistance to establish the basic capability necessary to suppress fires. The high cost of building materials, fire equipment and supplies is beyond the economic capability of a small, isolated community such as ours. To assist us we have turned to Federal/State programs supposedly designed to help us with this issue (US DHS/AFG, US FEPP, &amp; Montana DNRC Wildland Engine/County Coop programs). With each we have found insurmountable issues preventing the programs from providing support to us. These issues are presented below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Federal AFG program specifically discriminates against small rural volunteer fire companies in the evaluation and award of Federal Grant Funds. (Fiscal Year 2007 Assistance to Firefighters Grants, Program and Application Guidance, March 2007: Introduction – B. Overarching Funding Priorities, Page 4 "Therefore, for each activity below, DHS will provide a higher level of consideration to departments with significant levels of incidents and to departments that protect large populations relative to other applicants, regardless of the type of community served." &amp; Appendix 1, Funding Priorities and Allowable Expenses For Fire Departments, Page 22 "Departments with low call volume, or that serve small communities, will receive lower consideration.")</li> </ul>

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•The Federal FEPP program, which is specifically designed to support rural fire organizations, does not support these organizations in Montana because of a vehicle classification issue within the Working Capital Fund of the USDA Forest Service (documentation is available). Surplus Forest Service fire equipment, currently available locally, cannot be transferred to the West Kootenai Fire Protection Company or any local fire company. DNRC is hoping by the end of February that they would be able to screen Department of Defense bases at a higher level for usable equipment.

•The Montana DNRC Wildland Engine/County Coop program has been providing and replacing Wildland engines to mainly eastern Montana since 1967. The West Kootenai area, along with most of Western Montana, does not meet the primary requirement of the program. If the funding for this program is provided through State and/or Federal Taxpayers shouldn't the objective of this program be revised, especially after 40 years, to benefit all State residents?

How might cooperation be improved? On the positive side cooperation between out local DNRC, Forest Service, and Volunteer Fire organizations is very good.

Do you have ideas on how to reduce fire suppression costs or how to mitigate Wildland fires in your area? To reduce fire suppression costs invest in fire prevention/education, early detection, and rapid suppression. This can only be accomplished if the necessary resources are available locally. In our case State and Federal resources require 45 minutes or more to respond. We need the resources locally!

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1/22/2008	Alan Rollo	Sun River Watershed Group	arollo7@msn.com	<p>Fire Suppression Committee:</p> <p>I am Alan Rollo, coordinator, for the Sun River Watershed Group. We have been working on collaborative efforts for almost 15 years now including water quality, water quantity, noxious weeds and other natural resource issues. We have been very successful because we find approaches that look at everyone's views and concerns.</p> <p>When it comes to fire, we cannot come to any consensus on how to deal with fires because it is so divisive. We can agree though that the current process is broken and needs thorough review.</p> <p>Some key areas to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fires should be dealt with differently in drought years than normal years. One way to measure this is moisture level in the trees and surrounding plants.</li> <li>2. In drought years, a more aggressive approach should be used.</li> <li>3. Federal and state fire management plans need a complete review to ensure everyone is on same page. Do not have to agree but talking about fire control during the fire season is too late.</li> <li>4. Encroachment of homes in fire prone areas is an increasing problem and is costing the average taxpayer too much. These homes should be taxed according to danger levels of location. If it taxes them out of having a home there, so be it. Not fair to normal taxpayer to protect homes.</li> <li>5. Waiting for the fires to get to edge of public lands to fight is too late. Need healthy buffers that federal, state and local landowners agree upon, if possible.</li> <li>6. We may need fire management procedures that fit across a large area but in many cases, the procedure needs to be at a watershed level. Lets be prepared now, not after the fire has started.</li> <li>7. Lets bring in the scientists that look at long and short-term fire control. Not all</li> </ol>



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				<p>agencies or private sectors either but a variety to consider all views.</p> <p>Bottom line, we need a complete overall of of the system. We went from fighting all fires to let-it-burn policy to not sure what is going on now.</p> <p>We can find some common ground but not under current policies.</p> <p>Thanks for consider our views.</p> <p>Sincerely,  Alan Rollo, Coordinator  Sun River Watershed Group</p>

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1/30/2008	Racene Friede	Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission	gcexec@montana.com	<p>On behalf of Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission, I would like to voice my support of the following suggestions submitted by Vicki Hucke, Vice Chair - Tourism Advisory Council:</p> <p>1) Keep funding at adequate levels for successful suppression, response and recovery activities to preserve our forests, wildlife, scenery and all of the other natural attributes that attract visitors to Montana.</p> <p>2) To encourage all governmental agencies to include tourism organizations when developing their fire communication plans. Frequently the losses to businesses are due to an inaccurate public perception of the threats of wildfires. Media tends to over exaggerate and sensationalize fires which lead to visitors canceling trips and huge losses to tourism businesses. Working together we can help to manage the publicity implications by creating unified, consistent, accurate messages, giving our residents, our visitors, and the media the information they need while mitigating negative impacts to tourism.</p> <p>3) To allow a single declaration of a "state of emergency" that would be state wide and season long. Each time a declaration is issued it creates negative attention to our state and limiting these declarations would be very beneficial for tourism.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding this vital topic.</p> <p>Racene Friede Executive Director Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission</p>

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1/31/2008	Brent Nelson		michaelnelson@hughes.net	<p>The Honorable Rick Laible Dear Sir,</p> <p>I would like to this opportunity to comment on current forest fire fighting policy.</p> <p>1) The large fires of the last few years have had equally large negative effects on small communities that depend on tourism, hunting etc.</p> <p>2)The previous policy of fire suppression has resulted in large amounts of fuel, so when a fire starts, it has the potential to become enormous.</p> <p>3)Mountains in Mexico have little problem with large fires because they have not had a policy of suppression and fires are rarely larger than 5000 acres.</p> <p>On the right track....</p> <p>1) Log, yes, but in such a way that will diminish fuel supply</p> <p>2) Open closed gates temporarily in appropriate places and in a safe season in previously burned areas(this will burn again) so firewood gatherers can supply their needs creating a low fuel fire lane where fire might be stopped.</p> <p>3)Some of the problem for firefighters is locked gates sometimes waiting hours for someone to arrive with a key.</p> <p>Thank-you for the opportunity to comment.</p> <p>Brent Nelson PO Box 774 Darby, MT 59829</p>

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1/31/2008	Verdell Jackson	State Senator	vjack@centurytel.net	Public forum recommendations on forest management and fire reduction: I will send it by E-mail. It appears that the format will be lost if I send it on this website. Thanks, Verdell Jackson